

Department of Justice High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project *Phoenix, Arizona*



Addressing Interoperability

The Department of Justice (DOJ) Wireless Management Office (WMO) is working to improve long-term federal interagency communications across the Nation. As an interim step, and as a response to a request from the House/Senate CJS Appropriations Subcommittee staff, the DOJ WMO has been leading the High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project (“25 Cities”) to provide targeted cities with basic and immediate interagency communications capabilities among local, state, and federal agencies during emergency response. Twenty-five cities were selected using criteria that included perceived risk and population size. As stakeholders in 1 of the 25 cities, Phoenix metropolitan area, local, state, and federal public safety agencies have been working collaboratively with the DOJ WMO to address basic interoperable communications.

Participating Agencies

Partnership among Phoenix area local, state, and federal public safety agencies has been instrumental in the development of comprehensive interoperability solution sets. Participating agencies have included—

- Apache Junction Police Department (PD)
- Arizona Department of Public Safety
- Arizona State University PD
- Avondale PD
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
- Chandler PD
- Drug Enforcement Administration
- El Mirage PD
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Gila River Indian Community
- Glendale PD
- Goodyear PD
- Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office
- Mesa Fire Department
- Paradise Valley PD
- Peoria PD
- Scottsdale PD
- Surprise PD
- Tempe PD
- Tolleson PD
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- U.S. Marshals Service
- U.S. Secret Service

Key Successes

DOJ and area stakeholders successfully achieved basic interoperability and emergency response communications improvements in the Phoenix metropolitan area through the implementation of three interoperability solutions. The solutions support and upgrade the use of existing, disparate interoperability and communications systems by extending coverage, capacity, and availability to more public safety agencies, as well as providing new interoperability resources to the public safety community. Additionally, in the course of meeting this project’s interoperability goals, stakeholders were able to expand the working relationships among local, state, and federal agencies to resolve interoperability objectives for the area.

The first solution upgraded and added equipment to the existing Arizona Inter-Agency Radio System (IARS) very high frequency (VHF) and ultra high frequency (UHF) mutual-aid channels to improve the utility of the channels for public safety agencies. Equipment was upgraded at four tower sites to resolve interference and reliability issues associated with the previous configuration of the mutual-aid channels.

The second solution involved installation of 800 megahertz (MHz) Phoenix Regional Wireless Network (PRWN)/Mesa Trunked Open Arizona Network (TOPAZ) control stations at 16 area communications centers. The control stations provide direct communications for increased coordination between agencies on disparate radio systems and agencies on the PRWN/TOPAZ radio systems.

The third solution provides three 800 MHz radio caches of 15 radios each and is available for deployment and use by participating agencies. The radio caches provide ad hoc interoperable communications between agencies and are programmed with talk groups from multiple area radio systems, including PRWN/TOPAZ, Maricopa County, and Glendale. The three agencies designated to own, maintain, and deploy each radio cache are Glendale Police Department (Western Valley), Mesa Fire Department (Eastern Valley), and the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office (Central Valley).

In support of these solutions, operational assistance was provided through the development of operational guidance documents to ensure effective and sustained use of the interoperability solutions. To coordinate common operating procedures for the new interoperability solutions, DOJ worked with local, state, and federal agencies. This collaborative effort resulted in the development of operational guidance documents to address rules of use for IARS mutual-aid channels and PRWN/TOPAZ control station talk groups. In addition, a field resource guide was developed to coordinate the deployment of the radio caches and existing mobile audio switches. Under the aegis of the Arizona Public Safety Communications Committee, the stakeholders continue to meet to update these documents and discuss interoperability efforts in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

Moving Forward

The cooperation and support between participating agencies and DOJ WMO provided scalable solutions designed to give additional agencies access to the interoperability solutions. Sustained operations, maintenance, and support of these interoperability solutions will be coordinated by key stakeholders. These efforts, along with the area’s long-term interoperability plans, will ensure continuity in addressing interoperable communications among public safety agencies in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

Contact Information

If you would like to know more about this initiative, please contact—

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